THE

MASSACHUSETTS

Missionary Magazine,

FOR *NOVEMBER*, 1803.

ON THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD.

[*Continued from page* 218.]

INFERENCES AND REMARKS.

IV. IS God immutable, then all his promises will be accomplished.

When we turn over the pages of sacred truth, we find great and precious promises made to the true friends of God. To them is promised the divine aid, to such a degree, that they shall persevere in holiness to eternal life. The Apostle was confident that he, who had begun a good work in the saints, would perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Said the divine Redeemer to his disciples, "Verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my words and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation. My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. He that believeth is not condemned. He that believeth shall be saved. Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall obtain mercy. If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." These passages, not to mention a vast number of others of similar complexion, sufficiently prove, that the real subjects of divine grace will persevere in holiness to eternal life. Their perseverance does not depend upon the nature, or quantity of holiness which they possess, but upon divine *promise*. Independently of almighty aid neither the most accomplished christian on earth, nor the highest saint in

heaven, would ever poſſeſs another holy feeling. They are perfectly dependent for all their holy feelings and exerciſes. But God who has had mercy on them, by reconciling their hearts to himſelf, through Jeſus Chriſt, has determined and promiſed that they ſhall not be caſt away and come into final condemnation. He hath determined that his friends now on earth ſhall perſevere in that divine life, which he hath begun in their hearts, until they arrive to the ſtature of perfection, and are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the ſaints in light. Whoſe holineſs and felicity will be commenſurate with his own. And ſince God has determined and promiſed theſe things, they will certainly be accompliſhed; for he is immutable. It is true Chriſt informed his friends that they would meet with great trials and afflictions while performing the journey of life. "Behold, I ſend you forth as ſheep in the midſt of wolves; be ye therefore wiſe as ſerpents and harmleſs as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will ſcourge you in their ſynagogues. And ye ſhall be brought before governors and kings for my ſake, for a teſtimony againſt them and the gentiles. They ſhall deliver you up to be afflicted, and ye ſhall be hated of all men for my name's ſake." But notwithſtanding our Lord forewarned his diſciples, that they would meet with much tribulation in this world, yet he exhorted them not to be diſcouraged, but to be of good cheer, for he had overcome the world. He told them that in his father's houſe were many manſions; that he would go and prepare a place for them, and come again and receive them to himſelf, that where he was, there they might be alſo. If the friends of Chriſt individually in the ſeveral ages of the world, are not called to encounter all thoſe trials, which were peculiar to his primitive diſciples; yet it is certain that all who live godly in Chriſt Jeſus, will ſuffer more or leſs perſecution, and that through much tribulation they muſt enter into the kingdom of God. And while they participate with their primitive brethren in the cup of adverſity, they likewiſe ſhare with them in the promiſes of life. They are aſſured that the afflictions which they here endure, which at preſent are not joyous but grievous, are diſciplinary, and under the wiſe and benevolent adminiſtration of their heavenly Father will prove ſalutary. Yea, they are aſſured that all things ſhall work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpoſe. And all theſe promiſes will certainly be accompliſhed, for God is immutable. Reſpecting the Church, God has promiſed that, it ſhall be preſerved, and greatly enlarged, notwithſtanſting the malevolent aſſaults of all its enemies. Said Chriſt, "Upon this rock (meaning himſelf) will I build my Church, and the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it." All poſſible efforts have been uſed by the combined powers of earth

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and hell, to extirpate the Church of Chriſt; but they have failed in accompliſhing this important object of their deſires; nor will they ever ſucceed; for it is founded upon a rock; the immutable rock of ages. Infidels may rail and ſneer, rage and frown, but the Church will live and flouriſh, amidſt all their oppoſition. The time is rapidly approaching, when the *now popular cauſe of infidelity*, ſhall be ſwept from the earth. And upon its ruins ſhall be erected the Redeemer's Kingdom, which ſhall become univerſal. "It ſhall come to paſs in the laſt days, that the mountain of the Lord's houſe ſhall be eſtabliſhed in the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills; and all nations ſhall flow unto it. And many people ſhall go and ſay, come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the houſe of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion ſhall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jeruſalem. And he ſhall judge among the nations, and ſhall rebuke many people; and they ſhall beat their ſwords into ploughſhares, and their ſpears into prunning hooks: nation ſhall not lift up ſword againſt nation, neither ſhall they learn war any more. They ſhall not hurt nor deſtroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth ſhall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the ſea." Theſe promiſes undoubtedly refer to that glorious millenial age, when the kingdom of the Meſſiah will become univerſal in this world. And they will aſſuredly be accompliſhed, for he who hath promiſed is immutable. "Hath he ſaid, and ſhall he not do it, or hath he ſpoken, and ſhall he not make it good?"

For corroborating evidence that the Divine promiſes will be fulfilled, we may appeal to the conduct of God towards his Church and people in former ages. Did he promiſe to be the God of Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob? So he was. Did he promiſe to give the land of Canaan to their ſeed for an inheritance? So he did. "There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had ſpoken unto the houſe of Iſrael: all came to paſs." Nor will there fail aught of any good thing, which he has promiſed to his Church and people; but all will be accompliſhed. Agreeably to his promiſe, all his true friends ſhall perſevere in holineſs to eternal life. He will not forſake them under the ſevereſt trials and afflictions which they may be called to encounter. His grace ſhall be ſufficient for them. All things ſhall conſpire for their good. The kingdom of the Redeemer ſhall continue, and ere long ſwallow up all the kingdoms of this world. Hence let the friends of God take courage. Fear not this world, though clothed in frowns and terrors. Your Jeſus has overcome the world, and has told you not to fear thoſe who have power only to kill the body. Fear not, and ſhrink not from the cup of affliction. "Ye have not yet reſiſted unto blood, ſtriving againſt

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ſin. And be not forgetful of the exhortation which ſpeaketh unto you, as unto children. My ſon deſpiſe not thou the chaſtening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him, for whom the Lord loveth he chaſteneth, and ſcourgeth every ſon whom he receiveth." Be comforted in all your trials, with this ſupporting conſideration, that the Lord God omnipotent, infinitely wiſe, and good, reigneth, who never was, and never will be diſappointed; and never did, and never will diſappoint his friends. Not one of his glorious promiſes to them will fail of complete accompliſhment; for he is the "Lord, he changeth not."

V. Is God immutable, then his law never did and never can undergo the leaſt abatement or alteration; and mankind never were and never can be releaſed from their obligations to him. It is very poſſible ſome may imagine, that, in conſequence of the fall of man and the merciful interpoſition of the goſpel, that moral obligation under which mankind were placed from the firſt moment of their exiſtence, which required ſinleſs perfection, and virtually denounced endleſs puniſhment againſt the tranſgreſſor, for the leaſt violation, has been abated, and is leſs rigid in its demands and denunciations, than it was before theſe events took place. But if we miſtake not ſuch an hypotheſis is perfectly inconſiſtent with the divine immutability. The moral law is a tranſcript, or repreſentation of the moral character of God. It expreſſes his feelings towards right and wrong; and teaches rational creatures the obligation they are under to him. Since God is what he is, a ſelfexiſtent, independent, infinitely perfect Being, it is fit and ſuitable that all rational creatures ſhould make him the ſupreme object of their affection. Mankind would have been under indiſpenſable obligation to do this, had God never expreſsly required it. But in his law which he has revealed to them, he has expreſſed this obligation in plain unequivocal language. "Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy ſoul, with all thy mind, and with all thy ſtrength." And "Curſed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." This command and prohibition grew, ſo to ſpeak, out of the very character of God. It is becauſe he is an infinitely perfect Being, that rational creatures are under ſuch obligation to him. And for this reaſon tranſgreſſion is deſerving of that curſe, which is denounced againſt it. This obligation is binding on the angels of light and glory. It is their indiſpenſable duty to love God ſupremely, or in a meaſure proportionate to their intellectual capacities. And ſuch would be their criminality, that they would juſtly deſerve endleſs puniſhment for the leaſt deficiency. This was true with regard to the angels who kept not their firſt eſtate. They violated their obligation to God. In conſequence of which they were inſtantly

doomed

doomed to ceaſeleſs wo. But notwithſtanding ſuch an amazing change has taken place in their character and circumſtances, no change has taken place in God. He is juſt as worthy of their ſupreme love now, as when they were angels of light. And ſo long as he is immutable, they will be under indiſpenſable obligation to love him in this manner. Nothing but a change in God, can deſtroy, or in the leaſt diminiſh, their obligation to him. The ſame is true with regard to mankind. Before his apoſtacy, Adam was under obligation to love God with all his heart, on account of his intrinſic excellency. It is true Adam fell. And in his fall, his moral character underwent a total alteration. From a friend, he became an enemy to God. But God remained the ſame. Hence, Adam's obligation to his Maker continued undiminiſhed; and ſo it is with his poſterity. Their rebellion has not, and never can, place them beyond the reach of obligation. They are under the ſame obligation to love God ſupremely now, as Adam was before he fell, for God is preciſely the ſame. And ſo long as he continues the ſame, their obligation to him will continue undiminiſhed. Nothing ſhort of an eſſential change in the Divine character, a change from infinite perfection, to imperfection, can deſtroy or diminiſh the obligation, under which mankind are placed, to love him ſupremely, or to poſſeſs that ſinleſs perfection which his law requires. But the infinite God, praiſed be his name, is immutable. He never did, and never will change. Therefore, be the circumſtances of mankind what they may, proſperous or adverſe; be they in heaven or hell, they will be under infinite and eternal obligation to poſſeſs ſinleſs perfection. And for the leaſt departure from ſuch obligation they juſtly deſerve to ſuffer the penalty of the law, until they can make reparation for the injury they have done it, by violating its juſt and reaſonable demands. But ſince ſinleſs perfection is their conſtant duty, they can never make reparation or atonement for ſuch injury. Should the ſinner repent the next moment after he has violated the Divine law, and ever after be perfectly obedient, neither his repentance nor obedience could make reparation for paſt diſobedience. Nor could the longeſt limited period of ſufferings ſatisfy the demands of the law for his paſt miſconduct. To ſuppoſe that the ſinner can atone for his offences, in either of theſe, or any other poſſible ways, and render it conſiſtent for God to *avert* that puniſhment, which a violation of his law merits, is virtually to deny the neceſſity of that atonement, which the goſpel has provided; nay, further, it implies a denial of the goſpel itſelf. For in that we are aſſured, "If there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteouſneſs ſhould have been by the law. But the ſcripture hath concluded all under ſin, that the promiſe by faith of Jeſus Chriſt, might be given to them that believe. Neither is there

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ſalvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we muſt be ſaved." Thus ſince that moral law, under which mankind are placed, is, like its glorious Author, immutable, both in its demands and prohibitions, thoſe who have once violated it, have rendered themſelves deſerving of all the evils involved in its penalty, nor is it poſſible for them to extricate themſelves from thoſe evils by any acts of obedience, which they can perform, or by any ſufferings to which they can ſubmit. If the law has its courſe upon them, their puniſhment muſt be endleſs. The reader will underſtand, that by the law abovementioned, we *invariably* mean the *moral law;* which, as before obſerved, reſults from the character of God, and the relation which intelligent creatures ſtand in to him, as their Creator and preſerver. Since he is what he is, it is fit and ſuitable, that all rational creatures ſhould yield to him that reſpect, which his law demands. Nor is it conſiſtent with the nature and fitneſs of things, or the higheſt good of the moral ſyſtem, that the moral law ſhould ever require or threaten leſs than it now does; or undergo the leaſt alteration; nor that mankind ſhould ever be releaſed from their obligation to God; for he is *immutable.*

HORATIO.

[*To be continued.*]

LETTERS ON SOLITARY DEVOTION,

[*Continued from page* 212.]

FROM *PASCAL* TO *JULIA.*

LETTER VI.

THE converſation you had, my dear Julia, the other evening with the young libertine, as narrated in your letter of the 15th inſt. ſuggeſts the principal objections which have been made to the duty of prayer. Though you have no difficulties in your own mind, agreeably to your requeſt, I cheerfully reply to theſe objections.

No perſon who allows the bible to contain a revelation from God, objects theoretically to the duty of prayer. For every body knows that this ſacred book is full of precepts, and examples in favour of it. A prayerleſs Chriſtian is, in every one's view, a contradiction. The objections which are urged againſt prayer are entirely deiſtical, and may be reſolved into theſe three.

I. The

I. The immutability of God, which is ſuppoſed to render prayer totally unavailing.

II. The omniſcience of God, which is ſuppoſed to make it needleſs.

III. The goodneſs of God, which is ſuppoſed ready to communicate, without waiting to be aſked, and which, therefore, prayer is ſaid implicitly to deny.

There is indeed another objection, that God muſt be diſturbed, and worried, rather, than pleaſed with ſuch reiterated begging. The firſt of theſe will be the ſubject of this letter. The others I muſt reſerve for a future opportunity. The objection is this, That God is for ever the ſame, that all his purpoſes are unalterably fixed; that therefore, prayer muſt be wholly inefficient and unavailing. This objection is founded entirely upon a wrong idea of the nature of prayer. I would not obviate it by denying the premiſes, but by rejecting the concluſion. The Arminians would think themſelves beſt capable of replying to it, as they do not admit the abſolute decrees of God. But it is not worth while to ſtrip the divine Being of his glory, and exhibit him as an improper object of prayer, in order to defend the duty. This is by no means neceſſary. The duty of prayer muſt be defended upon the ground that God is immutable in his purpoſes. It is evident, that if he were capable of change, he would be imperfect. As prayer is an act of worſhip, whether it can be more reaſonably offered to an imperfect, than to an unalterably perfect Being, I leave you to determine.

Prayer implies confidence; and we ſhould ſoon be diſcouraged from reſorting to a being in whom we could place no confidence. But it is evident that our confidence in God muſt be inevitably weakened, if not deſtroyed; if we believed him changeable.

The duty of prayer reſults partly from our being permitted, and invited to pray; and from being aſſured that our ſincere prayers ſhall be accepted; or from the connection, which we believe God has eſtabliſhed between prayer, and the obtaining of the good ſought. But if God be in any reſpect changeable, he may have already revoked, or yet revoke this eſtabliſhment. In ſhort, upon this ſuppoſition we know not that God has the ſame moral character to-day, which he had yeſterday. Nothing is ſecure; all the concerns of futurity are afloat. God is not a rock. His work cannot be perfect. Bleſſedneſs is impoſſible to any creature upon this ſuppoſition. The principle of the objection agrees with what the ſcriptures teſtify reſpecting the divine immutability. Reaſon ſo entirely coincides with this teſtimony, that moſt of the theiſtic philoſophers do not heſitate to argue upon the ground, that God's purpoſes are unalterable. Glory to his name, they are abſolutely ſo. "He is of one mind, who can

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turn him? He declareth the end from the beginning, saying, my *counsel* shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. He worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will." On this principle the name of God is a strong tower, into which the righteous can run and be safe. But how does this form a reasonable objection to the duty of prayer? If prayer were designed indeed, and used to produce an alteration in the divine purposes, the objection, it is granted, would hold. But what well informed Christian ever thought of this? Are we not taught, both by precept and example, that our ultimate petition should be, "thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven?" God's purposes, in the view of enlightened minds, are all of them too good, and too dear to admit a wish that any of them might be revoked, or that others might be substituted in their stead. True prayer is in coincidence with these purposes. The force of the objection rests wholly upon the supposition that it is against them. Here lies the difficulty, in the mistake of the objector; not in any interference between the duty of prayer, and the divine immutability. The different parts of prayer have been denominated by divines who have written on the subject, adoration, confession, thanksgiving, intercession, and supplication. We find all these in the prayers of our Saviour, and his apostles, sometimes separately, and sometimes together without any particular form, and as circumstances might render proper. Christ indeed differed from us in this respect, that he had no sins to confess. Now certainly there is no incongruity in *adoring*, in the manner of a direct address, an immutable God. If immutability be a perfection of his nature, it is our duty to prostrate ourselves before him, to bless, and praise him in view of it. If we are sinners, his immutability does not supersede the necessity, or set aside the propriety of our confessing penitently and humbly that we are so. If we are indebted to him, as we are sure that we received our being, with all its attendant blessings, from his hand, our indebtedness results from the execution of his kind designs, which are therefore a reason why we should give him our grateful acknowledgments. As prayer is a supplication for temporal or spiritual favours for ourselves or others, it will be said, perhaps, the objection is confined to this branch. A little consideration will shew us, that supplication is more proper and effectual upon the ground that God is, than upon the supposition that he is not, immutable. If he were mutable, whether we should succeed in our petitions or not, would, to say the least, be at all times uncertain. Sometimes we might be successful; at others we pretty certainly should not. This we find to be the case among mutable men. Petitioners succeed or not, as the humour of their superior happens to be. If he is in good humour they possibly prosper, if he is choleric they get their labour for their pains. On this hypothesis God would evidently

evidently be diveſted of the character of a prayer hearing God. The greateſt inducements to prayer would be loſt. The matter is quite otherwiſe upon the ground of his immutability. In this caſe his goodneſs ſecures to us the certain audience of all our reaſonable, and dutiful prayers; for it is always the ſame. His requirement of prayer is a perpetual edict of his government. The connection which he has eſtabliſhed between aſking, and obtaining the thing for which we aſk, reſults from his purpoſe, and is irrevocable. Hence prayer appears very far indeed, as far as poſſible from being nugatory. It is juſt as important as all means are to their end; as antecedents are to their conſequents. If God have determined to beſtow a favour, and fixed the condition on which he will beſtow it, the condition is indiſpenſable. It muſt precede. Prayer in the caſe before us is this condition. It is very extraordinary that the eſtabliſhment of an infallible connection between means, and their end, ſhould be ſuppoſed to annul the utility of means. It is on this principle that means are perfectly efficacious. On the other they have no certain efficacy. Means in this connection become a proper motive. As far as God can be moved, and he is moved, ſo as to feel the full force of every motive; he is induced to extend that mercy which we crave. His feelings and purpoſes are, and always will be, perfectly the ſame. But this idea does not militate againſt the efficacy of motive. What is it to us whether his reſolution to grant our requeſt were formed, in point of time, before we offered our prayer, or afterwards? It is not leſs a mercy, nor is our prayer leſs effectual in the former caſe than in the latter. But it is ſaid, as events are fixed, the ſame things will as infallibly take place without our praying as with it. This is not true. It may juſt as well be ſaid, that as God had decreed that the year 1803 ſhould produce its annual harveſt, it would as certainly be produced, without the heat of the ſun, and the fertilizing ſhowers of rain, as with them. Why ſhould we ſay that one thing will take place without another, when God has decreed, that they ſhall take place only in connection?

Pleaſed with the hope that divine grace will preſerve you from the entanglements of deluſive opinion,

I remain, My dear Julia,

Affectionately yours, &c.

RELIGIOUS CONFERENCE.

[*Continued from page* 224.]

Clerus. HAVING previouſly attended to the perfections of God and the divinity of ſcripture, let us now attend to *the nature* of *Providence.*

Theophilus. We hope, Sir, you will define Providence; for the acceptations of the word are ſo various, that we ſhall grope in the dark, without a ſeaſonable explanation.

Clerus. I am ſenſible the word Providence is capable of various acceptations. Authors and teachers have made it correſpond with their peculiar theories of ſentiment. In one author it imports the divine agency, in another the blind influence of fate, and in a third nothing but ſound to complete a period.

Theophilus. Pray, then, give us the proper theological definition.

Clerus. Providence, I apprehend, according to the religious import of the word, is the univerſal agency of God, which conſtantly cauſes the exiſtence of all creatures and objects both in the natural and moral worlds.

Theodore. Though I am not authoriſed to diſcard the definition, yet at firſt glance it appears to confound creation and conſervation. Is there no difference between the creation of the univerſe and its preſervation?

Clerus. Yes, my young friends, there is a difference between the creative and ſupporting agency of God, for the ſcripture ſays, "Thou Lord haſt made the heavens, the earth and ſeas; and thou preſerveſt them all." But the difference, on examination, is merely ſpecific and circumſtantial: for the conſtancy of God's preſerving agency is the only criterion which diſcriminates it from his creative agency. Preſervation is but the continuance of creation; for no man, independently of the conſtant agency of Deity, has power to protract his exiſtence, move a limb, or originate a thought.

Theophilus. Your opinion, Sir, is different from the common one, that men at their creation are inveſted with ſelfmoving influence, and no more dependent on God than a timepiece is on the author. Some theoriſts ſuppoſe that as a machine will move regularly ſeveral days and months ſucceſſively, without the agency of the author, ſo men and other agents are the ſubjects of delegated power to act in general independently of their Maker.

Clerus. You have exhibited the vulgar theory, and alſo the theory of ſome learned men who warmly advocate the ſelfmotion of the human will; but not the theory of inſpiration. Both

ſcripture

ſcripture and ſound philoſophy inform us, that creatures in every poſſible ſtage and attitude of their exiſtence are entirely dependent. Freedom and dependence are compatible, for while all our ſprings are in God, while in him we live, and move, and have our being, and in all our ways, we are voluntary; chooſe and refuſe without compulſion. There is no interference between human agency and divine.

Philander. I am loath to differ from my teacher, but is is hard work to believe that I am abſolutely dependent, and yet entirely free or voluntary in all my actions. Is it true that we are as dependent on divine agency for our voluntary exertions as for our exiſtence? Will not the doctrine of providence afford ſome relief?

Theophilus. Are you not a creature?

Philander. Yes, and chooſe to remain one.

Theophilus. Then you are willing to be entirely dependent on your Creator.

Philander. I am: but while this doctrine brings God ſo near, by conſidering me as dependent on his agency for what I *now am*, as for my *firſt exiſtence*, it makes me tremble. I am afraid to live: for agreeably to this theory I live in God, and am nothing at any moment without his direct efficiency.

Clerus. You ought to ſay, Philander, that according to ſcripture your preſent exiſtence is the effect of God's preſent agency: for what philoſophers ſtyle the love of nature or the love of preſervation, is but the unremitting agency of God. Between our agency and God's agency there is no intervening medium or influence. The will of God makes the univerſe what it is at every ſucceſſive moment of its exiſtence. Providence now effects what now exiſts: and if God were to withdraw his preſent agency the whole creation would vaniſh. On God's will the univerſe now depends.

Philander. According to your theory the univerſe, which compriſes the natural and moral worlds, is but the unremitting effect of God's conſtant agency.

Clerus. Nothing elſe, Philander; hence we ſay, that preſervation is but creation protracted or continued. God impreſſes us with theſe ſurrounding objects and we are impreſſed. The *ſeal* is his, and the *ſtamp* is ours. In one word, Providence is a conſtant cauſe, and the univerſe is a conſtant effect.

Theophilus. How great is God! How ſmall are men! Surely "the work of the Lord is honourable and glorious." The works of Providence are but the ſucceſſive works of creation. God is conſtantly effecting what was effected at the beginning, when he ſaid "Let there be light."

Philander. You have my hearty concurrence. Providence is either

either active or inactive. If inactive, it enſures no end; but if active, it is the unremitting repetition of creation: for creation aſide from divine agency is not only deſtitute of any preſerving influence or principle, but is a mere nullity.

Theophilus. We have perhaps aſcertained the general nature of Providence: and I now wiſh to attend to the particular acceptations of the word.

Clerus. I will attempt to enumerate the different ſenſes of the word Providence.

I. There are common providences, ſuch as the alternate courſe of day and night and the regular ſucceſſion of the ſeaſons.

II. There are remarkable providences; ſuch as the ſalvation of a child ten days by a ſingle plank upon the open ſea; the ſinking of mountains and cities by an earthquake, and other occurrences of ſimilar deſcription.

III. There are alſo miraculous providences, recorded by inſpiration; ſuch as the diviſion of the ſea, the pauſe of the ſun, and the reſurrection of the dead.

IV. We have alſo liberty to add the gracious providences or operations of the Spirit which change and ſanctify the hearts of men, and qualify them for heaven.

To ſubjoin diſtinctly the redeeming providences of God is needleſs. They are compriſed in the preceding articles. In the work of redemption common, remarkable, miraculous and gracious providences are all concerned.

Theophilus. We thank you, Sir, for theſe diſcriminations: for the various acceptations of the word have frequently been confounded. But pleaſe to mark the difference between common providences and remarkable providences.

Clerus. The difference is this, common providences are frequent and conſtant; but remarkable providences, or what ſome theoriſts improperly ſtyle ſpecial, are ſeldom. It is common for a woman to bear one child at a birth; it is leſs common to bear two; it is leſs common ſtill to bear three; when, therefore, a woman exceeds and bears five or ſeven it is really remarkable: for ſuch inſtances are ſeldom. No other diſcrimination between common and remarkable providences is neceſſary; for they are of the ſame nature. There is no difference but is circumſtantial. There are many common providences and but few remarkable ones.

Theodore. We underſtand the diſtinction. Pleaſe now to point out the difference between miraculous and gracious providences.

Clerus. Both differ from common and remarkable providences; for neither miracles nor new hearts are effected by the common operations of providence.

Theodore. We comprehend you, Sir, but pleaſe to inform us in what reſpects miraculous and gracious influences agree and differ between themſelves.

Clerus.

Clerus. The miraculous agency of God is displayed on matter and mind; but his gracious agency, only in the hearts of men. It is God's miraculous influence which stops the sun, and instantly restores reason to the subject of distraction, and effects other events of this discription; but his miraculous influence never produces new hearts; visibility is attached to miracles for the important purpose of instantaneously impressing and convincing the minds of spectators. Miracles are for a sign not to believers but to unbelievers; and are therefore visible; but regeneration which is effected by the gracious agency of the Spirit is in its nature invisible, and manifested by subsequent fruits.

Theodore. But is not renovation a miracle of grace? and is not the duration of the church styled by some learned authors a standing, permanent miracle?

Clerus. If a pupil were to make no difference between 4 and 6 in casting figures, he would stand corrected by the common rules of arithmetic: and does not the author who confounds miraculous influences with gracious influences stand corrected by the bible? For though the bible illustrates the mighty power of God in regeneration by his mighty power in raising the dead to life, yet the scripture does not style regeneration nor sanctification a miracle. Regeneration we grant is as great a display of divine power as resurrection to life; but this does not authorise us to denominate gracious influence a miracle. Miracles and graces are different effects of the divine agency and must not by a heedless use of words be confounded. As figures stand for pecuniary sums; so words stand for religious sentiments; and both must be used according to their real, proper acceptations. The obligations we are under, never to use the name of God in a careless manner, teach us to use the word Providence and other names and titles of Deity with judgment and veneration.

[*To be continued.*]

MEDITATION ON GOD's LOVE TO THE CHURCH.

WHEN I look into the holy scriptures, I find many expressions of divine love to the church. In the prophets God often speaks to Zion, or the society of his chosen people, in the language of most condescending and gracious affection. "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee. I have sworn that I would not be wroth with thee nor rebuke thee; for the mountains shall depart,

depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindneſs ſhall not depart from thee, neither ſhall the covenant of my peace be removed. I have loved thee with an everlaſting love ; therefore with loving kindneſs have I drawn thee." Beſides many ſuch direct expreſſions of love, the Moſt High repreſents himſelf as ſtanding in the moſt endearing relations to the church, calling it his family, his dearly beloved, his peculiar treaſure, his glory. In the new teſtament I find equally ſtrong expreſſions of God's love to the church.

What am I to think of all this ? How can I reconcile it with the known character of God ? He is perfectly holy ; the eternal enemy of ſin. But what is man ? The deſcription which the ſpirit of God gives of him, is only the deſcription of ſin in its various forms and degrees. Was there any moral beauty in the people of God, that attracted the love of his heart and guided his eternal choice ? No. They were by nature children of diſobedience and children of wrath, even as others. Evidence ruſhes on my mind from every part of ſcripture, that God did not ſet his heart upon them nor chooſe them for their goodneſs. Here I pauſe. If God viewed his people as ſinful and vile ; if he ſaw no goodneſs in them, which excited his love ; in what ſenſe did he love them ? what are the reaſons of that high regard, which he bore to his church from everlaſting ?

To ſatisfy myſelf I muſt recur to the pages of inſpiration, which firſt taught me that the church is the object of divine love. I muſt there learn what the ends are which God ſupremely values; what is the great plan on which he is acting, and what the means, by which he is purſuing and will obtain his choſen object. I muſt try to anſwer the inquiry conſiſtently with the holy character of Jehovah, and the glorious ſcheme he is carrying into effect. The ſubject is weighty, and ought to be contemplated with profound veneration.

The following reflections offer themſelves to my view. While attending to them, I ſeem to behold ſome rays of light brightening a ſubject, which has often been ſhrouded in darkneſs. Yet, if upon the moſt ſerious review, theſe reflections appear the dictates of vain imagination ; if they appear inconſiſtent with the general ſcheme of revelation, or the honor of Deity ; I will reject them as folly and preſumption, and ſilently adore the unſearchable love of God.

The firſt reaſon of God's loving the church, which I contemplate with ſatisfaction, is *his own glory diſplayed in ſaving the church.* God loves his own glory. He values it above all things ; and therefore ſets a high value on that by which it may be promoted. His people, conſidered as ſinners, afforded him a wonderful opportunity to glorify his great name. To ſave ſinners with everlaſting

laſting ſalvation; to raiſe the vile to moral purity, and the wretched to heavenly bliſs, God knew, would diſplay his perfections, as they were never diſplayed before. He ſaw that the ſalvation of his people through a Mediator would manifeſt his rich grace and all his attributes to the admiration of rational creatures. This ſentiment I found on the authority of inſpired Paul. To the church at Epheſus he thus repreſents the deſign of the goſpel diſpenſation; "To the intent that now unto principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be known *by the church* the manifold wiſdom of God." Now if God loved that his manifold wiſdom and unſearchable grace ſhould be ſeen and admired by the heavenly world; he ſet a high value upon the church, as the means of promoting that deſirable end. Hence the propriety of God's calling the church *his glory*. "I will place ſalvation in Zion, *for Iſrael my glory*." God eternally and moſt fervently loved the church, as the ſcene where his perfections would be diſplayed, as the intended medium through which his moral glory would ſhine for ever and ever. In this view all appears harmonious. I ſee that God's great love to his church is conſiſtent with a ſupreme regard to his own glory, yea, ultimately flows from it. Here too I ſee how the total depravity of thoſe who will be ſaved is not only compatible with the ſpecial love of God, but furniſhes the occaſion of its higheſt exerciſe and diſplay.

When I thus conſider the *glory of God* as the prime object of his regard in redemption, let me take care to affix definite ideas to the words I uſe. *What then*, I aſk myſelf, *is the glory of God?* In what does it conſiſt? How is it diſplayed? For ſatisfaction on this point I recur to the oracles of truth. Moſes prayed that he might ſee *the glory of God*. To encourage him to expect an anſwer to his prayer, God ſaid, *I will make all my goodneſs paſs before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee*. The name which he proclaimed was, "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long ſuffering, abundant in goodneſs and truth, &c." When God made all his *goodneſs* paſs before Moſes, he ſhowed him his *glory*. The *glory* of God conſiſts in his *goodneſs*. Without goodneſs he would have no moral excellence, and would be worthy of no honor. Infinite benevolence or love, which is only another name for goodneſs, is the divine glory. It is the intrinſic excellence of Deity.

Let me purſue this pleaſing contemplation further. After cloſely attending to the exerciſes of my own mind, I perceive that I can obtain no idea of true love or goodneſs ſeparate from the idea of doing good, or producing happineſs. When God does good, he acts out or diſplays his goodneſs. And when he diſplays his goodneſs, he diſplays his glory, or glorifies himſelf. By exerciſing and diſplaying his goodneſs, he honors his own character in the view of intelligent creatures. Accordingly, when I ſay

God

God loves his own glory, I muſt explain the propoſition by ſaying, *he loves to do good.* I cannot apprehend his glory ſeparately from his infinite goodneſs, nor his infinite goodneſs ſeparately from the greateſt happineſs of the univerſe.

Theſe thoughts, I hope, prepare my mind more clearly to underſtand the great reaſon, already mentioned of God's love to the church. He loves it with great and fervent love becauſe it affords him an opportunity to exerciſe his infinite goodneſs, in communicating and enjoying bleſſedneſs. I turn my admiring thoughts to the inconceivable happineſs, which his grace imparts to his redeemed people. If each one enjoys a bleſſedneſs pure and godlike in its nature and unceaſing in its duration; how great the ſum of what they all enjoy. A finite mind cannot comprehend it. None but God perfectly knows the worth of an eternal heaven.

I find the proſpect before me becomes larger and brighter. The happineſs of the redeemed is not all the happineſs brought about by redemption. By means of the church the whole kingdom of God is filled with new joy. The bleſſedneſs of angels is unmeaſurably augmented, by the new diſplay which God makes of his moral excellence in the work of redemption. To ſee how Jehovah glorifies himſelf through Jeſus Chriſt leads the holy inhabitants of heaven to ſhout for joy. But to place this ſentiment in another attitude, I obſerve, the holy inhabitants of heaven receive a vaſt acceſſion to their happineſs, by being acquainted with the everlaſting happineſs of the church. 'Tis their nature to enjoy pleaſure in the pleaſure they behold in others. By raiſing his redeemed people to the eternal enjoyment of himſelf, God adds greatly to the bliſs of the angelic world.

Why ſhould I here omit the bleſſedneſs which God himſelf enjoys in the work of redemption? Why ſhould I paſs over in ſilence the moſt important conſideration of all, viz. the happineſs which the God of all grace finds in ſeeing his own glory diſplayed and the good of his univerſal kingdom advanced by the ſalvation of the church? God's own bleſſedneſs in this reſpect was important and worthy of conſideration in proportion to its greatneſs; and it is great in proportion to his goodneſs. As his goodneſs is infinitely greater than the ſum of created goodneſs; ſo the bleſſedneſs he enjoys from the ſalvation of the church, is infinitely greater than what all other beings enjoy; and therefore was deſervedly the object of ſupreme regard in the ſcheme of redemption.

Thus it appears that the happineſs reſulting from redemption is great above all conception. Now God is infinitely benevolent. He delights in doing good. *Happineſs*, whether his own, or his creatures', is dear to him. The *general happineſs* is his higheſt aim. The agreeable concluſion to which I am brought is this:

God

God loves the church, becauſe he loves to do good, and the church affords him a glorious opportunity. He loves to do good to his creatures; and, in the place of a better expreſſion, I will ſay, he loves to do good to himſelf. In both ways his infinite benevolence is gratified by redemption. Thus he holds his ranſomed people in high eſtimation, as the ſubjects of ſo much happineſs themſelves, and as the medium of ſo much good to the univerſe.

Theſe reflections on God's regard to his church are in ſome meaſure ſatisfactory. Inſtructed by revelation, I can plainly ſee that his love to Zion ſprings from a ſupreme regard to his own glory; or in other words, from a ſupreme regard to the good of the univerſe. But I find paſſages in ſcripture where God ſpeaks of his church as *beautiful and lovely* in his view, and declares his *complacence and delight* in it. In order, therefore, to obtain full ſatisfaction as to this ſubject, I muſt conſider it in another point of view. The only conceivable ground of the complacential love of God to his people is the *moral beauty and glory*, with which they are clothed by his grace. Speaking to his ancient church, God ſays, "thy renown went forth among the heathen for *thy beauty*; for it was perfect through *my comelineſs*, which I had put upon thee." The Moſt High imprints upon his people his own moral image, ſo that they become partakers of a divine nature. By the Holy Spirit they are adorned with the beauties of holineſs. Their moral purity is begun in this life, and will be perfected hereafter. Now the Holy One of Iſrael regards with great delight and ſatisfaction the work of his own ſpirit in his people. Whenever he looks upon them in this world, he indeed knows what rebels they naturally are, how totally ſinful in themſelves. But his infinite mind does not ſtop here. His holy eye ſees the amiable ſpirit, which now begins to operate in them who are renewed. And whether his choſen people are already renewed or not, he evermore looks forward to what they will be hereafter. He ſees the character they will ultimately poſſeſs, when they will bear the complete likeneſs of Chriſt, and ſtand without blemiſh before his throne. Thus he loves, and he eternally loved and delighted in, the church, as deſigned to be the ſubject of perfect holineſs, and to bear for ever the impreſſion of the lovely character of Jeſus.

To repreſent God's love to the church as operating in this manner and proceeding on theſe grounds appears to fall in with the tenor of his word, and with the moſt exalted conceptions I can form of his wiſdom and benevolence.

Leſt this meditation paſs away without effect, I will endeavour to make a practical application of it to my own ſoul.

I. Let me learn *how to love the church of Chriſt.* I ought to

love it as God does; that is, my affection ought to proceed on the ſame grounds with his. I muſt love Zion as the bleſſed medium through which God's infinite glory ſhines and will ſhine for ever. I muſt love the redeemed, becauſe in them and by means of them God will greatly augment the ſum of general happineſs. I muſt love and delight in them, becauſe they now bear in part and will finally bear to perfection the image of God's beloved Son. If my heart be truly pious, it will thus harmonize with the love of God. Let me then inquire; Do I love the church for the ſake of God's glory? Do I love it for the ſake of the general good? Do I love it for the ſake of the moral beauty which is put upon it by grace? If I do, I am one with God. And if I am one with God in the temper of my heart, I may hope to behold his glory, and to be ſatisfied with his likeneſs. But

II. *How aggravated is my guilt, if I deſpiſe or neglect the church of Chriſt.* I have heard and read, how God loves his redeemed people. Certainly then, if I hate them, I am far from agreeing with God. Think, O my ſoul, think with ſolemn awe, how dreadfully wicked it is to deſpiſe Chriſt's church, to hate God's choſen, beloved ones. Chriſt ſaid to Saul, who was perſecuting the church, "Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me?" If I perſecute his people, I perſecute him. If I touch them, I touch *the apple of his eye*. If I wound them, I wound his heart. Let me then beware, and warn others to beware of this *great ſin*, which is nothing leſs than deſpiſing God's glory, the bleſſedneſs of the univerſe, and the beauties of holineſs.

III. *I here find powerful reaſons to labour and pray for the church.* God's heart is ſet upon it; and ſhall not mine be? He is earneſtly engaged to promote its proſperity; and ſhall not I be engaged too? The ever bleſſed Trinity has, from the foundation of the world, been carrying on a great work for the good of Zion. And ſhall not I co-operate with God? O my ſoul, what motives are here to lay thyſelf out for the good of Chriſt's kingdom. Shall I not pray for Zion? Shall I not pray conſtantly and fervently for the holy city and habitation of God? When I ſtand looking on the church and ſee how God's glory, how the good of the univerſe is involved in it, and how itſelf is adorned with the beauty of grace; ſhall I not feel for its welfare? Shall I not rejoice in its peace and riſing glory? Shall I withhold my influence, or my property, when I can ſubſerve its enlargement? Shall I grudge any thing I can do in this bleſſed work? Let this be my reſolution; I will ſeek the good of Jeruſalem. I will labour and pray for the church; and never be ſatisfied, till ſhe look forth in perfect comelineſs, and her glory fill the earth. And I will ever regard it as my only happineſs, to have a place, however low, among them who are intereſted in God's eternal love.

NEANISKOS.

SELF

SELF EXAMINATION.

MESS'RS. EDITORS,

AT the 144th page of the Magazine, Theophilus terminates a number of profitable remarks on ſelf examination, by this, queſtion: "*Is ſelf examination the firſt or the laſt duty of any unrenewed ſinner?*"

The queſtion, though attended with ſome obſcurity, merits an anſwer, not only becauſe the author deſires one, but becauſe it directly concerns the intereſt of ſouls.

By unrenewed ſinners, Theophilus undoubtedly intends thoſe who in no inſtance are conformed to God, and whoſe hearts in all inſtances oppoſe him, for this is the only character of unrenewed men, given by inſpiration. It is eaſy to remark that God requires no actions or exerciſes which are deſtitute of holineſs. It cannot, therefore, be the duty of ſinners, previouſly to any other action to examine whether they are God's friends. We will put a ſimilar queſtion: Is it the duty of a rebellious child, while treating his parents in the moſt undutiful manner, by ſpitting in their faces, to examine whether he is not dutiful? Is ſuch examination pertinent? Shall the blind man alſo who cannot diſcover the leaſt glimpſe of light at noon, examine whether he does not clearly diſcern ſurrounding objects? It is manifeſtly needleſs and cannot be his firſt duty. On the ſame general principle, who does not ſee that it is needleſs for thoſe who hate God with all their heart to examine whether they do not love him? Farther, is it the duty of ſinners to die in their ſins? We ſay no; by no means; God forbids it. Self examination cannot, therefore, be the laſt duty of graceleſs men, for he who dies while deſtitute of holineſs is conſigned to eternal ruin. Self examination, therefore, is neither the firſt nor the laſt duty of any unrenewed ſinner; but it is both the firſt and laſt duty of ſinners to be holy. Holineſs is the firſt and laſt, the leaſt and greateſt, and the only duty which God requires of ſinners or ſaints; for without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord. But ſays the inquirer; What ſhall the man do firſt who is the ſubject of miſtake, and thinks that he is the friend of God while he is in fact his enemy? Anſwer: He muſt firſt become God's friend, and then ſelf examination will be dutiful and profitable, acceptable and honourable.

REFLECTIONS.

I. What can be more diſpleaſing to God than for his enemies to examine whether they are not his dear friends?

II. What ſtronger evidence can ſinners exhibit of their dangerous

gerous ſtupidity than to ſpend time in examining whether they are not chriſtians?

III. How deluſive and dangerous the opiate which preachers often adminiſter to their people, when without any diſcriminating remarks, they call upon them at large to examine whether they are the children of God!

IV. Alas, how often has the proper effect of many good ſermons been loſt by this formal, indiſcriminate mode of expreſſion; "*Let us all now examine whether we embrace the truth.*" All ſtupid ſinners love to be intruſted with the buſineſs of ſelf examination; but they are not worthy of ſuch confidence. For preachers, therefore, either directly or indirectly to commit the truſt to ſinners, is but flattering them in their ſins. Inſtead of urging ſinners to examine whether they are not chriſtians, let us rather urge them to commence chriſtians immediately, and without delay; for God grants no portion of time to be ſpent in graceleſs actions. Not an inſtant is given for exerciſes which leave the ſoul expoſed to deſtruction.

SILENUS.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PIETY IN PARENTS AND GUARDIANS OF YOUTH.

To the ſerious conſideration of parents and guardians of youth, the following obſervations are ſubmitted.

I. IT is highly important, that parents and guardians of youth imitate the benevolent parent of all good, in effecting the permanent felicity of their families: God is the parent of angels and men. He has a numerous family of moral beings dependent on him, not only for temporal ſupport, but for ſpiritual and eternal life.

The higheſt good of God's family ever lies near his heart, in all his works of providence and grace. As every private family is a part of the numerous family of God; and, as pious parents harmonize with the great and good Parent of the univerſe in affection, intereſt and purſuit, they will like him, ſeek the permanent felicity of their families. The circle of their labours and immediate uſefulneſs is indeed ſmall; while his conſtant care is extended through the univerſe. Though the benevolent affections of parents and guardians embrace the higheſt good of the whole family of God, yet the ſouls of others, are not committed to their charge in the ſame manner as their own ſouls and thoſe of their families. Chriſtians are compared with ſoldiers; they are

alſo

alſo conſidered as labourers together with God. A ſoldier is not required to perform the office of a general, but to be faithful at his poſt. Every labourer is not required to act the part of a maſter builder, but to do the work aſſigned him. Parents are not required to take care of the whole family of God, but to improve their talents eſpecially for the good of their own houſeholds, and thus to imitate their heavenly Father.

II. Piety in parents and guardians of youth is peculiarly important, as it reſpects the ſpiritual concerns of their children. It leads to thoſe vigilant, humble, and prayerful exertions, which ſerve as a barrier to prevent youth from falling in with the corrupt opinions and practices of the age. Erroneous and deluſive doctrines are propagated with rapidity. Chriſtian doctrines and practice are by many rejected. Opinions are imbibed, which flatter the pride of ſinners, and practices are countenanced in every order of ſociety, which do not comport with the chriſtian temper. There is in this land an awful degeneracy from the ſtrict piety of our forefathers, both in principle and in practice. Great exertions are made to corrupt the minds of youth, and to prevent them from paying ſerious attention to their ſpiritual and eternal concerns. The religious opinions and good morals of ſober well inſtructed youth are attacked by bad example, by ridicule, ſcoffs and deriſion; by ſophiſtical arguments, and by falſe and witty aſſertions, which are calculated to pleaſe the fancy, and poiſon the mind.

Numerous families of bright and ingenuous youth, who might be an ornament to religion, and happy for ever in heaven, are now greatly expoſed to deluſion, and eternal ruin, by the craft of the wicked. Their unexperienced age then calls for the protection of parents and guardians. Does it not belong to them, as agents under God, to guard the opinions and morals of their children, and to take care of their eternal intereſts? Where ſhall children obtain counſel, inſtruction, and reſtraint ſuitable to their age, if not from their parents or guardians?

Of all human exertions, thoſe of pious parents are the moſt effectual barrier againſt the growing corruption of youth. The moſt faithful and affectionate labours of miniſters will be in vain to the riſing generation, without the concurrence of pious parents. Such parents, to good example, and faithful inſtruction, will add their fervent prayers to God for his bleſſing. How often have ſuch examples, inſtructions, and prayers, been uſed by God, as means of continuing a line of pious children in ſome families to many generations? Parents are dependent on God to ſucceed their endeavours; and they have good ground for faith and hope in him, if they do their duty. Were it not ſo, the corruptors of youth would have all the advantage.

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According to the natural courſe of things it is much eaſier to do hurt than to do good; to lead youth into the paths of folly and diſſipation, than into the ways of wiſdom. Many pious men may labour long in the cauſe of truth, and effect but little; "But one ſinner deſtroyeth much good." Good men, in promoting the cauſe of truth, muſt oppoſe all the evil paſſions and prejudices of human nature; but wicked men have only to put fuel to fire already kindled, and to lead where the unſanctified heart is naturally inclined to move. It is much eaſier to fill a ſpacious theatre with attentive ſpectators, or a ball room with ſprightly youth, than a houſe of worſhip with devout hearers. In places where but few attend upon God's worſhip, houſes of mirth, and places of vain amuſement, are thronged. In vain, are ſolemn and weighty arguments urged to perſuade thoughtleſs youth to look to a compaſſionate Redeemer for mercy, while a few ſtrokes of pointed ridicule will induce them to ſcoff at a bleeding Saviour. From the natural propenſity to evil in youth, infidels have derived great advantage in propagating error, and in oppoſing religion. But, pious parents and guardians of youth have an advantage above this: they have a God in whom they can truſt, who holds the heart of every creature in his hand, and who has manifeſted by his conduct, and in his word, that he heareth prayer. Let this conſideration encourage them to be faithful.

Were there as many pious and faithful parents and guardians of youth in our land, as there are irreligious and unfaithful ones, would not the religious ſtate of our youth be much more hopeful? Alas! How many ſtupid and thoughtleſs parents are there, who have little or no concern about their own ſouls, or the ſouls of their children? How many parents, who are apparently ſober and morally honeſt, but not truly religious, who deny Chriſt before men? How many formal parents, who have a name to live but are dead? How many infidel and ſcoffing parents, who treat with open deriſion and contempt the doctrines and duties of the goſpel? Alas, the danger of the times!

[*To be continued.*]

ON THE RICHES OF REDEMPTION.

IF the goodneſs of God is ſo admirably ſeen in the works of nature and the favours of providence, with what a noble ſuperiority does it even triumph in the myſtery of redemption! Redemption is the brighteſt mirror in which to contemplate this moſt lovely attribute of the Deity. Other gifts are only as mites from the divine treaſury; but redemption opens, I had

had almoſt ſaid exhauſts, all the ſtores of his glorious grace. Herein God commendeth his love; not only manifeſts, but renders it perfectly marvellous; manifeſts it in ſo ſtupendous a manner, that it is beyond parallel, beyond thought, and above all bleſſing and praiſe. *Pſ.* cvii. 2. cxi. 9. cxiii. 7, 8. cxxxix. 17. *Rom.* v. 8. *Eph.* iii. 19. *Mr. Hervey.*

Part of a Letter from President DAVIES *to Doctor* GIBBONS.

MY EVER DEAR FRIEND,

I AM juſt beginning to creep back from the valley of the ſhadow of death, to which I made a very near approach a few days ago. I was ſeized with a moſt violent fever, which came to a criſis in a week, and now it is much abated, though I am ſtill confined to my chamber. In this ſhattered ſtate, my trembling hand can write but little to you, and what I write will be languid and confuſed like its author. But as the Virginia fleet is about to ſail and I know not when I ſhall have another opportunity, I cannot avoid writing ſomething. I would ſit down on the grave's mouth, and talk awhile with my favourite friend; and from my ſituation you may foreſee what ſubjects my converſation will turn upon. Death! Eternity! the ſupreme tribunal. Bleſſed be my Maſter's name, this diſorder found me employed in his ſervice. It ſeized me in the pulpit, like a ſoldier wounded in the field. This has been a buſy ſummer with me. In about two months I rode about five hundred miles, and preached about forty ſermons. This affords me ſome pleaſure in the review. But alas! the mixture of ſin and many nameleſs imperfections, that run through and corrupt all my ſervices, give me ſhame, ſorrow, and mortification. My fever made univerſal ravages upon my underſtanding, and rendered me frequently delirious, and always ſtupid. But when I had any little ſenſe of things, I generally felt pretty calm and ſerene, and death, that mighty terror, was diſarmed. Indeed, the thought of leaving my family deſtitute, and my flock ſhepherdleſs, made me often ſtart back and cling to life; but in other reſpects death appeared a kind of indifferency to me. Formerly, I have wiſhed to live longer, that I might be better prepared for heaven, but this conſideration had but very little weight with me, and that for a very unuſual reaſon, which was this. After long trial I found this world is a place ſo unfriendly to the growth of every thing divine and heavenly, that I was afraid if I ſhould live longer, I ſhould be

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no better fitted for heaven than I am. Indeed I have hardly any hopes of ever making any great attainments in holineſs while in this world, though I ſhould be doomed to ſtay in it as long as Methuſelah. I ſee other chriſtians, indeed, around me make ſome progreſs, though they go on with but a ſnail like motion. But when I conſider that I ſet out about twelve years old, and what ſanguine hopes I then had of my future progreſs, and yet that I have been almoſt at a ſtand ever ſince, I am quite diſcouraged. O my good Maſter, if I may dare to call thee ſo, I am afraid I ſhall never ſerve thee much better on this ſide the regions of perfection. The thought grieves me. It breaks my heart, but I can hardly hope better. But if I have the leaſt ſpark of true piety in my breaſt, I ſhall not always labour under this complaint. No; my Lord, I ſhall yet ſerve thee; ſerve thee through an immortal duration, with the activity, the fervor, the perfection of the rapt ſeraph that adores and burns. I very much ſuſpect this deſponding view of the matter is wrong, and I do not mention it with approbation; but only relate it as an unuſual reaſon for my willingneſs to die, which I never felt before, and which I could not ſuppreſs.

In my ſickneſs, I found the unſpeakable importance of a Mediator in a religion for ſinners. O, I could have given you the word of a dying man for it, that that *Jeſus* whom you preach is a neceſſary, and all ſufficient Saviour. Indeed he is the only ſupport of a departing ſoul. None but *Chriſt*, none but *Chriſt*. Had I as many good works as Abraham or Paul, I would not have dared to build my hopes upon ſuch a quickſand, but only on this firm eternal rock. I am riſing up, my brother, with a deſire to recommend him better to my fellow ſinners than I have done. But, alas! I hardly hope to accompliſh it. He has done a great deal more by me already than ever I expected, and infinitely more than I deſerved. But he never intended me for great things. He has beings both of my own and ſuperior orders, that can perform him more worthy ſervice. O! if I might but untie the latchet of his ſhoes, or draw water for the ſervice of his ſanctuary, it is enough for me. I am no angel, nor would I murmur becauſe I am not. My ſtrength fails me, and I muſt give over. Pray for me; love me living and dying, on earth and in heaven, and hope the ſame from,

Dear Sir,

Your heart united friend and ſervant.

RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE.

FROM ONE OF OUR MISSIONARIES.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I ARRIVED at Mr. Alexander's, in Herkemer county, ſtate of New York, on Friday, June 24, 1803. Preached to one of his congregations, on the ſabbath. Monday rode weſtward to that part of the country where I have ſpent my time. The towns to which my labours have been chiefly confined, are Trenton, Ramſen, Stuben, Weſton, No. 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9, Camden. Theſe towns are ſituated on or near Mohawk River. The firſt town, in which I laboured for a conſiderable length of time, was Stuben. This place miſſionaries have frequently viſited; and it ſeems that the Lord has wonderfully ſucceeded their labours. Within two or three years there has been an attention to religion, and a church formed. The place has not been ſettled a great many years; and the people accordingly conſider themſelves young in ſociety. They give good attention to preaching, and appear to expreſs gratitude for miſſionary aſſiſtance. I have ſpent two ſabbaths in Stuben. Our ſabbath meetings, as well as lectures, and conferences, have been ſolemn.

Tueſday, July 5, afternoon was diſtinguiſhed as a time of prayer. Many people laid aſide their buſineſs and attended. After a ſermon the congregational, and baptiſt profeſſors of religion conferred, ſang and prayed together, with chriſtian freedom, to the ſatisfaction of each other. The conſequences of this meeting, as far as I could learn, were happy. We hope that an ardent ſpirit of prayer and watchfulneſs was excited.

I made a family viſit in this place, in the month of Auguſt, which I hope by the bleſſing of God was made profitable to ſouls. Two young women were under conviction, and very anxious to know what they muſt do. I endeavoured to ſtate their dreadful ſituation by nature. This ſeemed to fill them with diſtreſs, and led them to cry out for the prayers of chriſtians. Theſe inſtances of attention have ſolemnized the minds of other young people. The laſt meeting I attended in this place was really affecting. The young people tarried together in the ſchool houſe after the meeting was diſmiſſed. Sometimes without ſpeaking they would give vent to their feelings; at other times they would ſpeak to one another in a low voice, upon the ſtate of their ſouls. All the time, they appeared diſtreſſed. Although they lived in different parts of the town, they tarried till late in the evening at a conference; and when they bid me farewel, for the

laſt time, as we ſuppoſed, they expreſſed by their converſation and looks, their miſerable ſituation, and apprehenſions of a far more dreadful ſtate, in the world of ſpirits. My laſt words to them were by way of exhortation, to prepare for that ſolemn meeting at the bar of God, which probably would be our next. When I finiſhed with them, they deeply ſighed, and departed in tears.

Although there are not ſo many inſtances of converſion in this place as there have been, yet I hope the Lord has not forſaken it. I recollect an inſtance of a late hopeful converſion. I think miſſionaries can profitably ſpend their time in this place, and may be inſtrumental of preparing the way for the ſettlement of the miniſtry.

The town of Weſton, where I ſpent five weeks, at different times, lies weſt of Stuben and north of Rome. It is large enough for two diſtinct ſocieties, and able to ſettle two miniſters, were it not for diviſions. The methodiſts are numerous. Beſide them there is a conſiderable number of baptiſts. Thoſe who would be members of a congregational ſociety, live ſcattered in different parts of the town. The profeſſors are formed into a church, and hold their meetings every ſabbath.

Soon after I went into this place an afternoon for prayer was ſet apart. Here I met Mr. Cooley, miſſionary from Hampſhire Miſſionary Society. Each of us preached a ſermon on the occaſion, to a very large concourſe of people, conſidering the newneſs of the country, and the different religious ſects. At this meeting, there was a man deeply impreſſed, upon hearing Mr. Cooley preach upon theſe words, "Surely thou didſt ſet them in ſlippery places," Pſalm lxxiii. 18. The wife of this man met with a hopeful change on returning from this meeting, upon which I underſtand ſhe builds a hope of eternal life.

In the weſtern part of this town, there was an attention to religion about four years ago, ſuppoſed to begin, through the inſtrumentality of miſſionaries. The young people here have gone, ſeven, eight, and nine miles to hear me preach upon the ſabbath. A certain young woman was ſuppoſed to have met with a ſaving change, about this time, but has ſince plunged into a ſingular ſtate. She appeared to enjoy the conſolations of religion, it is ſaid, for two or three years after ſhe entertained a hope; ſhe was then enticed to attend a ball. From that time, a ſtate of darkneſs ſucceeded, which ſtill continues, and teſtifies to all who are acquainted with her, that "the friendſhip of the world is enmity with God;" and that the Holy Spirit will not commune with thoſe who "chant at the ſound of the viol."

I have had a number of ſolemn ſcenes to paſs through in Weſton; particularly at a conference meeting, when ſome came forward in diſtreſs of ſoul, and begged prayers for themſelves. The

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town of Weſton made an attempt lately to join with Rome, and ſettle a miniſter, but they did not ſucceed. As they are yet in a broken ſtate, they make this an argument to prove their want of miſſionary aid. They think that miſſionaries are the proper perſons to hunt them up, to unite them in the truth, and to defend them from the flood of error, which pours in upon them.

About twenty miles to the weſtward of Weſton lie the ſettlements of Camden, where I ſpent five ſabbaths of my miſſion. I preached four ſabbaths in No. 7 and No. 8, which formed but one ſociety, when I was there, and one ſabbath in No. 4, a few miles to the northward. The whole town of Camden is a large tract of land, lying partly between the eaſt end of Oneida Lake and Lake Ontario; it has been ſettled about ſix years. No. 7, No. 8 and No. 9, meet together for public worſhip. The church was formed at Paris, by the Rev. Mr. Steele, before its members moved to Camden. When they had covenanted together, they went as a band of brothers and ſiſters into the wilderneſs, where they conſtantly attend to the ordinances of God. When I firſt went to this place, the people inquired of me for a candidate. They had raiſed money for preaching, but could not procure any. Profeſſors of religion appeared awakened, and the proſpect of doing good appeared flattering. We held a day of faſting and prayer, which, I have reaſon to think, was a profitable ſeaſon. Old and young laid aſide their buſineſs, and attended, four or five hours, to religious exerciſes with but about twenty minutes intermiſſion; and I think I may venture to ſay the people were not tired with the meeting, when they went away. The longer I tarried in this place, and the more meetings we attended, the more attentive the people appeared. It appeared that the Lord was about to pour out his Spirit. When we held a conference after meeting on the ſabbath, moſt of the young people in the ſettlements would attend. They would go three miles to an evening meeting, and were never in haſte to return. For ſome time, I heard almoſt every day of new inſtances of unuſual attention; they came from the different parts of the ſettlement to converſe with me about their ſouls' concerns; diſputes about ſectaries ceaſed; and Deiſts themſelves confeſſed that they had better be chriſtians, and be on the ſafe ſide. I recollect two who obtained hopes while I was there; one was a woman, who came to a lecture in a careleſs ſtate, and was greatly ſtricken at the words of the text, when they were repeated. The words are in the third chapter of Gen. 9th verſe, "And the Lord God called unto Adam, and ſaid unto him, Where art thou?" Theſe words ſhe applied to herſelf, and remained a diſtreſſed creature, till we hope ſhe in reality found herſelf a willing ſubject, at the diſpoſal of a ſovereign God.

The

The people in these settlements feel the need of missionary assistance. Missionaries have not so frequently called here, on account, perhaps, of the newness of the place; but the land settles very fast, and places of worship are crowded whenever missionaries preach. Beside these settlements there are No. 4, and No. 5, to the northward, where I preached several times; and I hope with some success. No. 4 has been settled about four years. I spent a sabbath in this place. Universalism has crept in here, and its votaries are using their influence to proselyte the youth. There is, however, an organized church, which appears orthodox, and I hope in some measure, contends for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. The members of this church have never failed of meeting every sabbath since the place was first settled. No. 5 is about five miles westward of No. 4. It has been settled but about two years. They have no church formed; but are attending to the business. We had a lecture and after it a conference, while I was in the place, in which there was an uncommon solemnity among the people. Christians were very tender, and among the enemies of Christ, I thought there was a strange paleness. Christians were so overcome at the prospect, that they could scarcely answer me when I conversed with them upon the subject. This appearance was the more striking to me, as I supposed the attention all began that afternoon. But afterwards I learnt that those who were unusually tender in the meeting had been so before. The other places which I visited, Trenton and Ramsen, are ready to receive missionaries, and are dependent upon them for congregational preaching.

Missionary business appears to me both pleasing and useful. While I was on the ground, I found many who spake of the kind and benevolent exertions of missionary societies, with much apparent gratitude, and often with tears. The circumstances of people in new countries is such that they cannot make such pecuniary returns to societies, upon short notice, as they could wish. I have received

From Stuben	5 dolls.
From Weston	5, 48 1-2.
From the settlements in No. 7, No. 8, and No. 9, Camden	10.

[*To be concluded in our next.*]

THE

THE EXPERIENCE OF MRS. L——Y.

I LIVED almoſt entirely unconcerned about my ſoul, till I was paſt 18 years of age. I ſometimes thought of dying, but concluded I was as good as others, and ſhould fare as well. About this time I was much diſturbed in mind, by the diſcourſe of Rev. Mr. ———. I ſometimes thought I was one of the worſt of creatures in the world; and the conſideration mortified me exceedingly. I wanted to get rid of ſuch uncomfortable views and feelings. I tried to pray daily for ſeveral months; and followed it for the moſt part for ſeveral years; but ſoon my conſcience became in a great meaſure quieted, and I thought I was doing well. When I was about 22 I entered into a family ſtate. I aimed to diſcharge my duty to my family, and in ſeveral ſituations, thought I felt a reſignation to croſſing providences; which further flattered my vain hopes that I was in a fair way for heaven. When I was about 30, we removed to Peabody's patent in York County. For ſeveral years I thought if ever I became a chriſtian I ſhould be a Baptiſt. In this new country, I had but little opportunity of hearing preaching, till the Methodiſts came among us. I found their doctrines ſuited me exactly; and although I never joined their ſociety, yet I liked them. Their preaching comforted and encouraged me in the way that I was. I had opportunity frequently of converſing with a profeſſor, who was a Congregationaliſt, that lived not far diſtant; but he would give me no encouragement. I often felt put out with him, becauſe he would have no charity for me. But it was the means of my ſuſpecting that I was not on a good foundation. I was frequently in ſuch diſtreſs that I was put to it to keep it concealed from other people. I ſometimes made efforts to get rid of it, and too often ſucceeded in ſuch dreadful attempts; and my diſtreſs would leave me for a while; at which I was much rejoiced to think I could get along in a more peaceable way; but it would again return upon me from time to time. Sometimes I was ready to think it was all the works of the devil, that I ſhould feel ſo uneaſy when I could hardly tell for what. When I was 36, about 3 years ſince, I was alarmed at the death of a woman in the neighbourhood, who was greatly diſtreſſed for her ſoul upon her death bed. It cauſed me to ſeek and pray more earneſtly than before; and to form new reſolutions to do better than ever. But alas, I made them in my own ſtrength, and they led me again to have freſh hopes of myſelf. I thought I was growing better faſt, and took great ſatisfaction in my religious performances. But I was brought to a ſtand in an unexpected manner, and all my riſing hopes ſuddenly daſhed again. One evening

evening I thought I ſhould have a good time in ſecret prayer. I waited till the reſt of my family were gone to bed, and then retired and kneeled down to pray; but ſuddenly ſuch a ſenſe of my exceeding ſinfulneſs ſtruck into my mind, that I could not open my mouth, not even to ſay ſo much as *God be merciful to me a ſinner!* It ſeemed to me that I never had done any thing right in my life. All my prayers, that I before took ſo much delight in, now appeared to be performed in my own ſtrength, and abomina- in God's ſight. I now reſolved never to pray again in my life, unleſs I was forced to; but my diſtreſs was ſo great, that I did not hold my reſolution long, without trying to pray again. But God ſeemed at a great diſtance from me in prayer. I tried to get rid of my trouble, by paying a more than ordinary attention to my worldly buſineſs, but all in vain. I frequently meditated upon my ſinfulneſs, and ſearched my heart. Such exerciſes frequently took away all appetite for my food, and I felt diſcouraged and diſheartened from attending to any thing. Laſt fall as the days began to *ſhorten*, my diſtreſs increaſed with the thought, that my days were ſhortening in like manner; and often on afternoons, when the ſun was lowering in the weſt, I was deeply impreſſed with the thought, that thus I was *ſinking* to the loweſt pit. Every thing looked gloomy, and there was nothing in which I could take comfort. I thought I could give any thing in the world if things would look to me as they uſed to do. My diſtreſs continued increaſing, and my hopes growing leſs and leſs, notwithſtanding I tried to pray more and more; all my ſins ſtared me in the face; O how many ſlighted opportunities could I then think of! Paſt ſermons and admonitions, calls and warnings now broke in upon me like a flood, and it ſeemed as if there could be no mercy for ſuch a creature. I continued in this ſituation nearly a week, in which time I took but little food or ſleep. On the night of the 4th of Dec. laſt, I could take no reſt; I tried in vain to ſleep. I thought at laſt that I muſt make my caſe known to my neighbours, or I muſt die. Having for ſome time laboured under ſome bodily indiſpoſition, I concluded I could not live long at any rate. I roſe from my bed and walked the room. I thought of ſending for ſome of my neighbours, but it was a dark night, and I did not love to diſturb them. I thought of aſking my huſband to pray for me, but I then reflected how I had once deſpiſed young people that were religious. I had my choice in a companion that had no religion, (though otherwiſe a kind huſband) and now poor ſoul he could no more pray for me, nor himſelf than I could. I was afraid to leave the room on account of my health, and was brought to ſuch a ſtrait that I felt conſtrained to pray, although it was in my huſband's hearing. I did not feel aſhamed of it, for it ſeemed to me that

my

my case was so deplorable, that if every body knew it, they could not help praying for me. Afterwards I lay down again, but could take no rest. I could not think of resting the body, while the soul was in such imminent danger. My inquiry was, *What shall I do?* I thought I must arise without a moment's delay and lie at the feet of Jesus, and if I must perish to perish there; and although it appeared entirely just if I should be cast off for ever, yet as so many had obtained mercy, who could tell but I might. I arose in haste and tumult of thought; but suddenly my mind was calmed, and all seemed serene. These words came into my mind, "Be still, and know that I am God." I found I must be willing to be at his sovereign disposal, and wait his time to shew mercy. I felt exceedingly comfortable, and was led to admire God's patience in bearing with me so long, and saw that his justice would shine bright, if I should be separated for ever from him. I took down my testament and read, but it seemed a new book, although I had been acquainted with the bible from my youth, yet now it seemed as new, as if I had never read a letter in it before, in my life. Reading gave me a satisfaction, that I never felt before. Afterwards I lay down again and slept quietly till daylight. When I awoke, I burst into a flood of tears to think how I could get rid of my burden so soon, and how my many sins, which had been so aggravated, could be pardoned. It seemed to me, if they were forgiven, I ought to cry for them as long as I lived. I felt an inexpressible love for every body. I had thought in times past, that some of my neighbours had wronged me in some instances; but now it seemed as if all had done better than I had. After this I had frequent fears lest my sins were not forgiven, which caused me many tears. But in about three weeks I think God appeared for me, and his mercy through Christ appeared like a boundless fountain, and I experienced inexpressible joy, in viewing all my sins washed away. A few days after this a missionary from the Massachusetts Missionary Society came this way, and although I had formerly thought I never should profess religion in the congregational way, yet ever after I was delivered of my burden, and indeed for some time before, I wanted exceedingly to see a minister of that order. This missionary was the first that I had an opportunity of seeing and hearing, and truly it was sweet to my soul to hear the word from his mouth, and to come forward and attend to baptism myself, and bring my children with me. This was a privilege I felt myself unworthy of, although I rejoiced in the opportunity. It seemed to me that God sent the missionary this way on purpose, and I cannot be thankful enough for it; and I think it my duty to testify my gratitude to him, and the society that sent him, for their generous endeavours in sending the gospel into such

such destitute places. I desire the prayers of God's people, that I may be enabled to live to God's glory while I live in this world, that I may never be left to dishonour the cause of Christ, be carried through the trials that I may meet with here, and at last arrive to the mansions of eternal peace hereafter.

R. L.

Peabody's Patent, District of Maine.
July 29, 1803.

EXPERIENCE OF * * *

I HAD serious impressions when a child, some of which I can remember, before I was six years of age. My parents were professors, and parental instruction often deeply impressed my mind. I often felt afraid that I should die, and certainly go to hell; and while quite young, often felt afraid to go to sleep, lest I should awake in hell before morning. Sometimes I cried about it while I lay awake; and sometimes by saying the Lord's Prayer, I felt so far relieved as to go to sleep quietly. When I was a little past 12 years old, my attention was more seriously called up, by reading Mr. Shepherd's *Sincere Convert*. I then thought that I must lead a different life; was resolved to set about secret prayer. I accordingly began, and never omitted a day from that day to this, without trying to pray. But I had not followed praying long, before I concluded that I was considerably good; could not think of any of my age and acquaintance that I thought prayed as I did, and was ready to wish they did. Once and again, the thought would occur, "unless I am converted I shall be damned, notwithstanding all my good prayers." This occasioned uneasiness from time to time. Sometimes I tried to believe I was converted, as I had lived tolerably steady from my childhood, I did not know but I might be sanctified from the womb, and hearing the observation made, *that persons might be converted and not know it*, it served to help me in this belief. But when I heard christians talk of the exercises of grace, of communion with God, &c. I found I knew nothing about it, and gave up the thought of trying to believe I was converted. I sometimes reflected upon the terms of salvation. I found God had told me in his word that I must repent and believe, in order to be saved; but again, I read that Christ was exalted to give *repentance*, and faith was the *gift of God*. I sometimes felt in hopes of obtaining those graces by seeking from these words, *seek and ye*

shall

ſhall find. But again my hopes would fall before this word, *Many ſhall ſeek to enter in and ſhall not be able : and not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, &c.* I found, I could not believe myſelf, nor lay God under any obligation to beſtow grace upon me by any of my ſeeking. Such conſiderations often occaſioned the enmity of heart to riſe againſt God, for placing me in ſuch a ſituation, though I little thought then, that it was enmity againſt God. I uſed to think, if God had only ſuſpended ſalvation upon ſomething I could have done, while unconverted, there would have been ſome ſenſe in it ; but now it was all out of my reach. I thought I would have been willing to run to the ends of the earth, to climb to the moon, (if practicable) and die a thouſand deaths, (if I could have come to life again, and not be damned,) to have made the ſalvation of my ſoul certain. When I heard of the ſudden converſion of ſome openly profane perſons, I wondered why God could not convert me as well as thoſe : I was ſure I had a better title to it than thoſe who never prayed ; and if God ſhould caſt me off, after ſo many good prayers, and affectionate tears, it appeared to me it would be really a hard caſe ; and yet in that very temper I would go away and confeſs to God, in prayer, that I was a poor miſerable, unworthy, ſinful creature, and that it would be juſt in him to caſt me off for ever. I was in hopes, if I made ſuch humble confeſſions, that God would not be ſo hard hearted as to caſt me off at laſt. And ſo deceitful was my wicked heart, that it did not once then tell me I was lying to God ! When I was under twenty, by reading and paying attention to the ſubject, I was convinced of the inſufficiency of my own righteouſneſs to ſave me either in whole or part, and was reſolved I would utterly renounce all dependence upon it, and depend only upon Chriſt for ſalvation. After this, I thought I was free from ſelf righteouſneſs. After this I had opportunity of hearing a Deiſt pour ridicule upon the ſcriptures. It troubled me much ; but it eventually forwarded my conviction. I found I lacked an *internal evidence* of the truth of divine revelation ; that I ſtood only upon the prejudice of education, and longed to know religion by experience. I felt very unhappy for nearly a year after this, by times, and thought it would have been better for me if I had been ſome creature that had no ſoul. I have ſince thought, that if I had not had opportunity of hearing chriſtians talk upon experience, I ſhould have turned Deiſt ; but by that means I could not doubt of the reality of religion. I found it ſometimes difficult to read ſome parts of the bible without thinking of the banter of the Deiſt, particularly the Song of Solomon, was ready to wiſh it out of the bible. But O, how much comfort ſhould I have loſt if my wiſh had then been *realized !* Nearly the laſt of this unhappy year, I had opportunity of hear-

ing *Boſton's Fourfold State* read in a ſociety meeting. That part of it where he is treating of being cut off from the *old ſtock*, and grafting into the *new*, was made a means, I believe, of giving the laſt ſtroke to my falſe confidences. I then felt as if it was a gone caſe with me; I had then been praying, after my faſhion, for more than ten years, and had got no nearer converſion, as I knew of, than I was the firſt moment that I began. My whole life appeared now nothing but ſin; my prayers, I ſaw, flowed from wrong motives, and could avail nothing. If I had been much more diligent and fervent in them than I had been, it would have amounted to the ſame thing. I now felt myſelf in the hands of a ſovereign and holy God, againſt whom I had been ſinning all my days. It appeared perfectly juſt if he ſhould caſt me to hell, and I felt as if I muſt ſay amen to it, dreadful as it was, without replying againſt him, for I wondered he had not ſent me there long before; but in as much as I was out of hell, and God was merciful, I thought there was a bare poſſibility that he might yet convert and ſave me. I then came to God like a poor, naked, deſtitute, empty handed beggar, that had nothing to plead but *mere mercy for mere miſery*. I did not dare aſk for great things, I thought I could be contented with crumbs of mercy. I remained in this ſituation about three days, when the way of ſalvation by Chriſt opened to my view with ſuch clearneſs and delight, as afforded inexpreſſible ſatisfaction. I ſaw how God could be juſt and yet juſtify the ungodly, that believe in Jeſus. I thought if I had a thouſand ſouls I could venture them all upon Chriſt. I then wondered I had never ſeen things in this light before, when I had been trained up in this doctrine, that I muſt be ſaved only by the righteouſneſs of Chriſt. I now ſaw, that ſo far from being clear of ſelf righteouſneſs, I had made a righteouſneſs of *my reſolve not to depend upon my own righteouſneſs*. And ſo far from being willing to do *ſo much* for my ſalvation as I once thought, I now ſaw that I had been unwilling to accept a *free gift*. After this I ventured to exerciſe a little hope, but had many ſore ſtruggles with doubts and temptations, for nearly four years, but after that, it pleaſed God ſo to clear up my evidences, by his word and ſpirit, that I have entertained a comfortable aſſurance of my ſtate for a number of years, although I find from time to time, a law in my members warring againſt the law of my mind; but I believe Chriſt will help me to gain the complete victory at laſt, and that eternity will be ſhort enough to ſhout his praiſe.

BIOGRAPHY.

BIOGRAPHY.

Mrs. SARAH GILL.

EXTRACTS FROM HER DIARY. [*Continued from page* 204.]

Internal Evidences of a Christian Heart.

MY heart is very deceitful, but so far as I know it, I know when I feel happiest, and what I delight most sensibly in. I love my friends dearly, but I love the presence of God more. I delight in good society, but I prize communion with the Father of spirits more. I love to serve my friends, but I delight vastly more in feeling my very will entirly subject to God. Yea, I have found an unspeakable pleasure in having my will crossed, and my carnal desires denied by him. And I do know that I never felt better pleased than when I surrendered my will, affections, and all my concerns into his hands, and left it with him to do just what he pleased therewith. Is not this real religion? If it is not, I know not what it can be; nature cannot attain it. It is contrary to nature to love to be crossed, and this because God chooses it. Can less than a divine power work this in such a sinful heart? Surely no. Be thankful, O my soul, to the God of grace. Can I ever praise him enough for bringing vile wretched me out of darkness into marvellous light! My errand now to the throne of grace, is to get more of this heavenly temper; I would have it the very breath of my heart daily, hourly, and in every moment of my life, "Father not as I will, but as thou wilt." O my heavenly Father give me this conformity to thee. Let my will be crossed, humbled, broken, till it is swallowed up in thine. Let thy will be the rule of mine, empty me of self, and mould me into thine image for Christ's sake. Amen.

I TRUST I have had more real delight in the things of God the past month, and more solid pleasure, than ever I took in the world and all its gay allurements. The word and the divine truths of the gospel have been prized and delighted in, especially those which relate to the divine person, wondrous offices, actions, benefits, love and grace of the blessed Redeemer. I have loved to read of him and meditate on him; yet alas, I know not what to think of myself. My heart is so apt to loose this gust, to forget this savour of his name, to return to sloth, and yet farther to wander from him; and some days I have such a backwardness to secret prayer, that it is, when performed, gone about as a task, and I have no spiritual views of God or desires after spiritual

mercies.

mercies. Again, I get ſome faint glimpſe and ſeem to want to have the enjoyment of God's preſence, and to be afreſh brought near to him, even to his ſeat, to behold his glory, to ſee his beauty, and that I may have the higheſt eſteem of him, and ardent love to him, and heart ſatisfying communion with him. Again, I return to a dull indifference, yea, to an abſolute *negligence* of him, ſo that I can come to no clear ſatisfactory concluſion about my ſtate. If I am a believer, I am the loweſt of all; if a hypocrite, a ſelf deceived one, and in awful danger of periſhing. Lord Jeſus, I beg thee to have pity on me and ſave me to the uttermoſt; thou canſt do it, I believe thou canſt, and I beg thy free mercy. True I am a great ſinner, but my ſins, though they deſerve infinite puniſhment, do not ſurpaſs thy powerful grace, for that is infinite. I would flee to thee, and venture on thy rich grace, venture my ſoul upon thy grace, and beg to be ſaved from my ſinful nature as well as guilty ſtate, forthe one is my malady as well as the other! Lord ſeize my whole ſoul, ſanctify and cleanſe every part of it, and let me from this evening be thine, in an everlaſting union and ſure covenant, and never more be my own or the world's, but love, fear, ſerve, and delight in thee for ever. Lord let this be the happy event that ſhall ſucceed all my folly, vileneſs and guilt, the great iſſue of all my wanderings, my apoſtacies and perplexities, and thine ſhall be the glory, for ever, Amen and Amen.

" How moſt exact is nature's frame!
" How wiſe the eternal Mind!
" His counſels never change the ſcheme
" That his firſt thoughts deſign'd."

NOR is it poſſible to add to, or alter that plan for the better. His foreknowledge and wiſdom excludes the ſuppoſition of any after amendment; it was complete in all its parts; each perfectly adjuſted, ſo as to form one harmonious whole.

I bluſh with a conſciouſneſs of my extreme folly, in every diſſatisfied thought I entertain with any of thy diſpenſations; O thou wiſe Governor! I am aſhamed of my baſe ingratitude in that when thou haſt aſſured me that in all thy diſpenſations, in every afflicting ſtroke, in every croſs, yea, in every ſcourge of thy rod, ſtill thou art "ever mindful of thy covenant;" always acting in concurrence with it; not a ſingle circumſtance befalls me but what is agreeable to that gracious charter. However intricate and dark my circumſtances appear to human reaſon, yet I have no room to diſtruſt thee; they are all clear in thine eye; and though I know not what is to befal me a moment beforehand, whether downy peace or dire calamities await me, yet this I know, that putting myſelf, and my all, into thine hand, I ſhall be ſafe; ſafe for time, and ſafe for eternity. I hope I have often, and often,

ten, committed my immortal part into thine hands, and laid the wait of its ſalvation on my divine Redeemer, and with ſacred pleaſure left it with him; to his all-gracious care have I alſo repeatedly truſted all my temporal concerns, and with an entire affiance left them with him. And O! with what ſacred ſerenity have I then walked under the ſhadow of his wings? How did I riſe above all my fears; above all my ſufferings; above all my enemies; and in the triumphs of faith could ſay,

"I know I've made my refuge God,
"And found a moſt ſecure abode;
"Have walk'd all day beneath his ſhade,
"And there at night reſted my head.
"Now I will ſay my God thy power
"Shall be my refuge and my tower,
"I that am form'd of feeble duſt,
"Make thine almighty arm my truſt;
"How happy I! my Maker's care
"Shall keep me from the fowler's ſnare," &c.

Thus bleſt was I in the ſweets of heavenly peace, while I repoſed myſelf in the arms of eternal truth!

What remains, O my ſoul, but a *renewal* of thoſe acts of faith? This will enſure renewed happineſs. Go then, and depoſit all thy caſe with him, on whoſe ſhoulders hangs the weight of the whole creation! Go and carry thy burdens, thy wants, thy griefs, thy fears, thy deſires, to him, and leave all at the foot of his throne; having done this, reſt ſatisfied that he who is the hearer of prayer will in his time redreſs thee; that nothing ſhall befall thee but what infinite wiſdom ſees to be beſt! Stedfaſtly continue to confide in him; believe his promiſes, and live upon his faithfulneſs; ſo ſhall they be life unto thee; and ſtrength to all thy ſoul! What are all the pleaſures of ſenſe, the blandiſhments of the world, but nauſeous dregs? What the ſociety of the moſt knowing, and beſt of friends? Tis empty to the communion I long after! what the knowledge of nature, to true ſpiritual acquaintance with nature's origin! Never had I a taſte, nay nor a conception of pleaſure, till a ray of divine glory beamed on me, and warmed this heart, and diſſolved it with love! the heavenly luſtre ſpread all around me; I welcomed its illuminations, and felt its enlivening influence! I then opened into marvellous light, and inexpreſſible communications followed! And though the Divine Being had before appeared in his moſt dreadful attributes, and I was in fearful horror, knowing my ſins, my enmity and obſtinacy, conſidered him as my almighty enemy; and was trembling under the weight of my guilt, and his anger, yet no ſooner did he by his ſpirit reveal himſelf in his true character, but that inward revelation wrought ſuch effects, and was followed with ſuch conſequences, as nothing but almighty grace

can

can perform. From union to him by faith, flows communion with him; and this gracious communion *I have called* and nothing elſe can I call, *happineſs*.

FAIN would I get my heart in tune for the ſacred exerciſes of piety; but ah, my affections are cold, my mind lazy, and I cannot with vigor perform any duty! When will my releaſe come from this burdenſome clog of clay! When ſhall my happy jubilee appear! when I ſhall get free from this principle of ſin *within*, from a diſtracting world *without!* When ſhall this heart ceaſe to be treacherous, my dear Redeemer? When wilt thou take the entire poſſeſſion of me, and cauſe me to live wholly to thee? I am weary and ſick of my ſloth and inactivity in the ſublime buſineſs of devotion. Thou deſerveſt to be ſerved with the height of pious affections; nothing leſs than the burning ardor of fervent love ſhould accompany each prayer, each thankſgiving, each ejaculation, yea, each thought. But alas! my devout expreſſions freeze on my lips, my heart is cold to all the impreſſions of redeeming love! That it is ſo, is I hope a burden to me. I cannot be eaſy, I muſt ariſe and ſeek him "whom my ſoul loveth," loveth, though with ſo faint a flame, ſo infinitely ſhort of the merit of the object.

As long as I am in this tabernacle, I expect to groan under my burdens; I have many kinds of burdens, but the greateſt of all is, the plague of my own heart; I have the higheſt reaſon to cry out with the great apoſtle, and great chriſtian, "O wretched that I am, who ſhall deliver me from this body of ſin!" Bleſſed be God a Deliverer is provided; Jeſus has undertaken the work, and has he not omnipotence to effect it? Be encouraged, then, O my ſoul, to hold out in thy conteſt with ſin; reſiſting its motions; ſtruggling, fighting, wreſtling even until death; ſo ſhalt thou gain the conqueſt, and receive the *laurel* of him, who purchaſed both the victory and the reward by his ſpotleſs righteouſneſs and meritorious ſufferings. Bear up a little longer, and preſs through all difficulties. When once thou getteſt free, no more ſhalt thou cry out of a dark underſtanding, cold affections, perverſe will, nor murmuring paſſions, but all thy ſoul ſhall be ſweetly attempered to the buſineſs and the bleſſedneſs of that ſtate where God is ſerved in all the perfect beauties of holineſs! Amen. Even ſo Lord JESUS, may this be the lot of the unworthieſt of thy creatures, even for thine own mercies' ſake. Amen and Amen.

ANECDOTE.

ANECDOTE.

A CHRISTIAN lady in Yorkshire, England, setting down to breakfast, was very forcibly impressed, that she must instantly carry a loaf of bread to a poor man, who lived about half a mile from her house. Her husband wished her either to postpone taking the loaf until after breakfast, or to send it by a servant; but she chose to take it herself instantly. As she approached the hut, she heard the sound of a human voice; wishing to hear what it was, she stepped softly, and unperceived to the door, when she heard the poor man praying, and among other things he said, "O Lord, help me; Lord thou wilt help me; thy promise cannot fail; and though my wife, self, and children have no bread to eat, and it is now a whole day since we had any, I know thou wilt supply me, though thou shouldst again rain down manna from heaven." The lady could wait no longer; she opened the door; yes, she replied, God has sent you relief. Take this loaf and be encouraged to cast your care upon him who careth for you; and when you ever want a loaf of bread, come to my house.

POETRY.

For the MASSACHUSETTS MISSIONARY MAGAZINE.

LINES ADDRESSED TO AN INFANT.

HAIL, placid babe, first object and reward
Of love parental, joyful at thy birth;
Kindred and strangers, smiling with regard,
All welcome thee a resident on earth.

May no rough blast annoy thine op'ning bloom,
Though blasts are frequent in earth's desert clime;
The sun looks down on many an infant's tomb,
But may'st thou share his light beyond thy prime.

May heav'n assist a mother's faithful hand
To speed thy growth, to guard thy tender age;
And add the joy to see thy mind expand,
As objects strange thine eyes and ears engage.

May

May thy glad father, while to ev'ry eye
His image lives and brightens ſtill in thee,
Rejoice thy ſtrength'ning faculties to try,
And bend the twig as he would wiſh the tree.

May grace divine thy little heart renew,
A moral change that little heart requires,
Corrupt the parentage and offspring too;
None but of heav'nly birth to heav'n aſpires.

May thy firſt liſping be thy Maker's name,
May pure religion decorate thy youth;
Thy manhood more its excellence proclaim,
And thy death prove the bliſsful pow'r of truth.

Jeſus the Saviour was a babe like thee,
Save the foul nature in thy boſom bred;
But oh! how much thy bleſſings diſagree
With his coarſe ſwaddling clothes and manger bed.

May thy firſt knowledge be to know his love,
In Bethl'hem's babe alone can babes be bleſt,
He left for pain and death the throne above,
That babes and men might find celeſtial reſt.

Like him, a child approv'd by earth and heav'n,
May'ſt thou in virtue as in ſtature grow,
And cheerful diff'rence to thy parents giv'n
His filial love exemplify anew.

May the prime object of his life be thine,
Jehovah's glory, univerſal good;
Amid the world may'ſt thou his foll'wer ſhine,
With wiſdom, love and gentleneſs endued.

Thus may'ſt thou eye ſerene the verge of time,
At each review thy pureſt joys increaſe,
Till quitting earth thy ſpirit riſe ſublime,
By angels guided to the realms of bliſs.

LEANDER.